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ABSTRACT

The study examined mainstreaming efforts for limited English proficient (LEP) handicapped students in a sample of 21 Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Directors and teachers from both the bilingual education and special education departments were interviewed, programs were visited and documents examined. The focus was on three main areas: identification, assessment, and placement of mainstreamed LEP handicapped students; instruction of mainstreamed LEP handicapped students in bilingual education classrooms; and inservice training for staff involved in servicing these students. Among findings were the following: bilingual special education programs were rare for non-Hispanic LEP handicapped students; there was a shortage of bilingual support personnel; most LEAs referred students for special education assessments only after attempting to modify their regular bilingual education program; there was a serious shortage in bilingual assessment personnel; more than half of the LEAs used bilingual teams to make placement decisions; all LEAs reported meeting the required monitoring of individualized education programs; bilingual education teachers tended to use the regular bilingual education curriculum with both handicapped and non-handicapped LEP children; and there was insufficient coordination between bilingual and special education departments in planning and providing inservice training. Recommendations were offered regarding personnel development, inservice training, testing and screening, and the interface between bilingual education and special education. (CL)

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"Research & Evaluation in Social Sciences, Health & Education"

A STUDY OF MAINSTREAMED LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT
HANDICAPPED STUDENTS IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study, initiated and funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs, is to describe the state-of-the-art of mainstreaming handicapped Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in bilingual education programs in grades K-6.

In the early 1970's Mercer, in her now classic Riverside study, found that LEP children were being disproportionately placed in Special Education classes because testing procedures were biased and bilingual education programs were not available (Mercer, 1971). By 1980 Bergin, in a document published by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education reported that the situation had reversed itself and there was a tendency to place LEP children in Bilingual Education classrooms without providing appropriate special education services for the handicapped among them.

In an attempt to focus more clearly on how LEP handicapped students are being served today, this study closely examines mainstreaming efforts in a sample of 21 Local Education Agencies (LEAs*). These LEAs were selected because they had bilingual education programs, they served a variety of linguistic groups and they represented diverse geographical regions of the country. In these LEAs, directors and teachers from both the Bilingual Education and Special Education Departments were interviewed and Bilingual Special Education Coordinators were interviewed where they existed. Available documents and literature were inspected, and programs in nine of these LEAs were visited and observed.

* LEAs are a diverse group of administrative units below the state level. In addition to local school systems, LEAs in our study included three county school systems.

The study focused on three main areas:

- o The Identification, Assessment and Placement of Mainstreamed LEP Handicapped Students
- o The Instruction of Mainstreamed LEP Handicapped Students in Bilingual Education Classrooms
- o Inservice Training for Staff involved in Servicing Mainstreamed LEP Handicapped Students

Cross-site comparisons were made between the LEAs in the sample. The final report also includes profiles of the whole program for mainstreamed LEP handicapped students in nine of the LEAs.

This Executive Summary presents our major findings and lists our recommendations.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- o The LEAs in our sample were found to be at different stages of development in providing services to mainstreamed LEP handicapped students.
- o LEP handicapped children tend to be formally screened for handicaps, referred to the Special Education Department, assessed, and placed via an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) when there are bilingual special education services available for them. When bilingual special education services are not available for them, LEP handicapped students tend to remain in bilingual education classrooms, without a formal IEP, without being formally identified as handicapped, and the Bilingual Education Department remains responsible for their education.

- o In almost a third of the LEAs we studied, bilingual special education instructional services were available for the majority of LEP handicapped students, although bilingual support personnel (such as speech therapists) were not always available. In another third of the LEAs, there were some bilingual special education services (sometimes consisting of a bilingual aide assisting a monolingual English teacher) but a shortage existed. Five LEAs reserved their limited numbers of bilingual special education teachers and aides for self-contained bilingual special education programs and thus mainstreamed few, if any, of the LEP handicapped students in these programs. Two LEAs had no bilingual special education services. For non-Hispanic LEP handicapped students, bilingual special education programs are rare. These students tend to receive ESL rather than native language instruction.
- o For non-Hispanic LEP handicapped students, bilingual special education programs are rare. Six LEAs provided some ESL special education instruction for these students, but the remaining LEAs had no special education to offer them other than the English speaking special education program.

Language Screening

- o All 21 LEAs had procedures for identifying the home language of LEP children when they entered school and for determining their language dominance and English proficiency. The LEAs in our sample tended to place children in bilingual education programs, at the outset, if they were found to be Limited English Proficient. Those LEAs that had bilingual personnel available to determine the children's native language

proficiency, as well as English language proficiency, had more information for determining an appropriate educational program.

Screening for Handicaps

- o Twelve of the 21 LEAs in our sample routinely screened all children entering kindergarten for handicaps. In these LEAs, LEP children were screened in a similar manner to English speaking children, except that instruments tended to be translated for LEP children and their screening teams tended to have one or more bilingual members. Very few of the instruments were appropriately validated or normed on LEP populations, however, and they thus could make lower socioeconomic LEP children appear handicapped when they are only culturally and linguistically different. Screening staff ranged from whole bilingual teams, to only one bilingual professional, aide or interpreter on the team.
- o In the remaining nine LEAs, LEP children with handicaps were sent for special education screening only if they were referred by teachers, parents, or other interested parties. This arrangement tends to produce fewer identifications of handicaps than universal screening.

Referral

- o Most LEAs reported that they did not refer children for a special education assessment without first attempting to help the children by modifying their regular bilingual education classroom program. One LEA required teachers to attempt three pre-referral strategies. Another LEA had a unique diagnostic prescriptive class in which LEP children with learning problems were placed daily for six months for observation and an

attempt to correct the problem through intensive English instruction and enhancement of self-concept.

- o There was often a reluctance to refer mildly and moderately handicapped LEP children to Special Education Departments if bilingual special education services were not available for them. In some LEAs there is an informal policy that LEP handicapped students are not to be referred for special education until they can function in English or unless their handicap is so severe or disruptive that an English speaking special education placement is preferable to a bilingual education placement.

Assessment

- o Most of the LEAs reported serious shortages in bilingual assessment personnel. LEAs have tried to cope in various ways including the use of trained or untrained interpreters, the use of central teams or contracted professionals, and the use of non-verbal tests administered by non-bilingual personnel. However, there were still heavy backlogs of children waiting to be assessed and LEAs were forced to establish priorities.
- o The testing approaches most frequently used with LEP students were the common culture approach (which places more reliance on non-verbal measures) and translations of tests. Most of the assessment instruments used are not yet normed on LEP populations. Only a third of the LEAs were incorporating newer and less biased multipluralistic approaches in their assessment procedures.

Placement Procedures

- c When LEP children have been formally assessed, their placement is determined by the team that writes their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). More than half of the LEAs used bilingual teams either at the school level or district level to make placement decisions for LEP students. Other LEAs usually had at least one bilingual representative on the team.
- o Because there is a shortage of bilingual special education personnel, some LEP handicapped children are not being formally identified or placed by the special education department; instead they are remaining the responsibility of the Bilingual Education Department.

In 13 of the 21 LEAs in our sample, the proportion of bilingual education students formally identified as handicapped is less than the nationwide incidence of identified handicaps (10%) among all students that is reported by the U.S. Office of Special Education. Eight of these LEAs have identified handicaps in 5% or fewer of their LEP students. It is unlikely that the incidence of handicaps is lower in a Limited English Proficient and predominantly low socioeconomic group than it is in the nation as a whole. It is more likely that there is an underidentification of LEP handicapped students.

Monitoring and Exit Procedures

- o When LEP handicapped children have been formally identified and placed by the special education department, P.L.94-142 requires that their IEPs be reviewed at least once a year and that the students be re-evaluated every three years. All LEAs reported that they met these required monitoring

procedures for handicapped students, and seven LEAs gave evidence of more frequent monitoring.

- o Most of the LEAs allowed handicapped LEP children to stay in bilingual programs longer than non-handicapped LEP children. Three of the LEAs set a maximum limit of five years for handicapped children, and four LEAs specifically said they had different exit criteria for handicapped and non-handicapped students.
- o LEP children who may be handicapped, but who do not have formal IEPs drawn by the Special Education Department, tend to be monitored by the Bilingual Education Department alone, using bilingual education criteria.

The Instruction of LEP Handicapped Students in the Bilingual Education Classroom

- o Most of the LEAs studied had well established bilingual education programs. Some of the LEAs articulated their own bilingual education instructional objectives, while others relied on the objectives found in the textbooks and materials they stipulated for each grade. Most of the LEAs used commercially produced materials, but two LEAs designed their own materials. LEAs tended to use one related textbook series in English, native language and math for grades K-2 and another for grades 3-6.
- o There is a great diversity of textbooks being used by the LEAs for teaching oral and written English. The most frequently mentioned were: IDEA materials, Crane, Santillana, English Around the World, and Scott Foresman English Series. For Spanish language teaching the Santillana

series was the most popular, being used in 13 out of 21 LEAs; Economy, Crane and Laidlaw were used by 4 or 5 LEAs each. Some LEAs used a parallel curriculum for Spanish and English reading/language arts instruction. Silver-Burdett and Scott-Foresman were the most popular math textbooks.

- o Bilingual education teachers tend to use the regular bilingual education curriculum with both handicapped and non-handicapped LEP children. They did not report having any materials specifically designed for LEP handicapped children aside from some teacher made materials that are not now available to the general public.
- o Most of the bilingual teachers reported that the way they dealt with LEP handicapped children was through adaptation of their instructional approaches. Teachers individualize the curriculum for a handicapped student through such methods as simplifying instructions, designing worksheets with larger print and fewer words to a page, providing repetition and reinforcement or presenting materials in a different sequence. Depending on the child's handicap, the teacher may also adapt procedures to provide for one to one and small group instruction, peer tutoring, and oral or untimed tests.
- o Adaptations by the bilingual education classroom teacher tend to be better (1) when the teacher has had some special education training, (2) when a bilingual special education teacher or bilingual resource specialist is providing some consultation materials, or (3) when the classroom teacher is particularly competent and sensitive.

- o The major complaint of bilingual education classroom teachers who work with LEP handicapped students are 1) the lack of low level-high interest bilingual materials, and 2) the difficulty of providing individualized attention in a classroom that has so many different language proficiency levels and ability levels.
- o When Bilingual Education Directors were asked what their goals were for LEP handicapped students they tended to mention the same type of goals as for non-handicapped LEP students. Most of these goals were concerned with the learning of English, the achievement of academic success, and the development of good self-concepts. None of the Bilingual Education Directors gave evidence of having focused specifically on the curricular needs of handicapped students, although two reported that they were just beginning to develop guidelines for programming LEP handicapped students.

Inservice Training

- o There are comparatively few special education teachers who have bilingual backgrounds and few bilingual education teachers who have special education backgrounds. Both types of teachers need inservice training in order to understand how to work with LEP handicapped students.
- o In general, the strongest inservice training efforts focusing on the needs of LEP handicapped students are made by the LEAs that are most committed to improving or maintaining services for these children. Federal funding has helped to make inservice training possible in most of these LEAs.

- o When special education training has been given to bilingual education departments the focus has most frequently been on legal requirements and identification and referral procedures. Only half of the LEAs have given inservice on techniques for instructing the LEP handicapped child in the mainstreamed bilingual education classroom; however, this is the topic most often wanted for the future.
- o When bilingual education inservice training has been offered to the special education department, the focus has most frequently been on procedures for placement in bilingual education programs, and students' culture and socialization patterns. The topics least often addressed were learning to speak the students native language and learning about bilingual education techniques. Two LEAs, however, had established Spanish language institutes for monolingual English teachers. Special education staff most frequently expressed an interest in having more inservice in language development of the bilingual child.
- o LEAs have found it difficult to provide inservice training for bilingual education teachers and special education teachers that is appropriate in terms of content and style. There is little experiential training directly related to the issues being encountered by professionals. There is insufficient focus on the needs of different types of personnel such as administrators, psychologists, teachers, and aides.
- o There is insufficient coordination between the Bilingual Education and Special Education Departments in planning and providing inservice that addresses the needs of staff who work with LEP handicapped children.

- o LEAs that have the best programs for LEP handicapped students and their teachers have been characterized by strong leaders who have spearheaded those efforts. Frequently the leadership has emerged from the Bilingual Education Program. However, few LEAs are currently providing training to develop leaders.
- o Most LEAs have not found effective ways of training LEP parents to become involved in the education of their handicapped children.

Interface

- o The provision of effective services for LEP handicapped children requires coordination between bilingual education and special education programs. It is more likely that integrated services will be provided when someone is formally or informally designated to be a boundary crosser in charge of coordinating LEP handicapped education. Thirteen of the LEAs that participated in our study reported they had bilingual special education coordinators.
- o Coordination of instruction at the local school level also has to occur if the individual educational plans designated for the children are to be effective. About half of the interviewed bilingual education and special education teachers reported that they met with their counterparts frequently, but less than half said they prepared their programs for LEP handicapped children jointly. Thus it appears that many teachers are not coordinating the instruction of LEP handicapped children to the degree that is necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Personnel Development

- o Additional Incentives should be provided to colleges and universities for the training of:
 - More bilingual special education teachers so that competently and appropriately staffed programs can be offered for LEP handicapped children.
 - More bilingual support personnel such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, and school counselors so that more LEP handicapped children can be appropriately assessed and serviced.
 - More paraprofessionals so that they can competently serve as interpreters or bilingual special education aides when native language personnel cannot be hired or the number of children in the class do not merit a full time bilingual special education teacher.

In-Service Training

- o Additional funds should be provided for leadership training of Bilingual Education Directors focused on how to develop and maintain services for LEP handicapped children.
- o Regular bilingual classroom teachers should be trained in special education methods, particularly in how to adapt the regular curriculum for the LEP handicapped child.
- o Special education teachers should be trained to work with bilingual students.

- o Funding should be made available for the preparation of model inservice training packages. An introductory package should address basic issues including legal and administrative guidelines, identification procedures, assessment procedures, and classroom management techniques. More advanced packages should be aimed at developing greater expertise in techniques and curriculum. Packages should be organized in a systematic series of modules and provide experiential opportunities.
- o Language institutes should be funded to increase the numbers of special education teachers and staff who understand the native language of their students.
- o Funds should be made available to encourage the development of model programs for training LEP parents to manage their handicapped children and take advantage of educational and community resources.

Testing and Screening

- o Screening and testing approaches should continue to be refined to diminish bias.
- o Culturally sensitive reading, math, intelligence and personality tests should be developed in the native language of LEP children.
- o Appropriate norms for commonly used non-verbal tests should be constructed.

- o Companies that have published bilingual materials should be encouraged to develop adaptations for mildly and moderately handicapped LEP children. Adaptations should be prepared by professionals who have classroom experience with LEP handicapped children.
- o Clearinghouses, professional organizations and universities should encourage teachers to come forth with materials they have developed for LEP handicapped students.
- o All curriculum adaptations should be critically reviewed and tested before distribution.

Interface Between Bilingual Education and Special Education

- o There should be greater integration between bilingual education and special education services and staff at the local, state, and national levels. To promote integration of services, funds should be allotted for inservice and operational projects that involve the collaboration of Bilingual Education and Special Education Departments.
- o Boundary crossing positions such as Bilingual Special Education Coordinators are important to integrating bilingual education and special education services. School systems should be encouraged to establish them.